Hobbs' Choice

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Hobbs' Choice

by AtticusCrete

Summary

The Minnesota Shrike - the untold version! Freddie Lounds will fuckin' love this! She wants the merchandise rights. Told in five chapters - regular updates, I'm not that kind of cruel!

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

The Girl Who Lived

God this is so boring. These girls are just so pathetic. Unbelievable. All little voices, and poor me, and oh it's so terrible. God they're so dreadful. She has absolutely no patience with them. Zero. Zilch. A big round nought.

'Group is sucking the life out of me' Abigail is walking along a path in the garden with Alana Bloom. Alana, good at her job, and kind too, is compassionate and friendly. She doesn't shy away from naming boundaries, but she's sweet about it. Abigail can see all this, and mostly tunes her out, it's just 'blah, blah, blah,' dull dull dull. There's only been a few moments of interest over the last week.

Firstly the weird European guy came back to visit on his own, and finally her cousin Em made it from out of town to visit. Em is mostly 100% great, and they share a lot with each other. They've hung out together since they were little, even when her parents moved away thinking Abigail's uncle and aunt were something of a negative influence. Ha! Goes to show doesn't it!

When Em came round they talked about what happened. Apparently Em went back to the house and somebody graffitied it with the words 'cannibals'. They clearly didn't plan it very well as the last few letters were a bit squashed up. She'd nearly snorted her Pepsi when she heard that. And the photos are hilarious. Em is thinking about flogging some stuff to Freddie Lounds. Abigail's all for it, they can split the cash after all.

Abigail's delighted that her cousin is thinking about trying to get a job locally, something flexible, maybe with shifts so they can meet up at different times. Avoiding a pattern is important in a place like this. And it's hard to be truly random. Abigail knows all about that. It's no coincidence that everyone of the girls who died applied to the same colleges as her.

Still, you can hide things in patterns. Like those seeing eye pictures? All fractals and complex geometry and then squint hard, let your brain slip sideways and it's suddenly the Statue of Liberty. Or the Golden Gate Bridge, or whatever.

She talks to her cousin about the three doctors; Bloom, Graham and Lecter. Apparently Dr Lecter is also a psychiatrist. When she says that he was the man on the phone Em just falls around laughing 'has he told anyone? Fuck-it that's hilarious. Does he have a clue?' This is the great thing about Em, they've always been on the same wavelength, they're almost telepathic. And if Em moves closer maybe they could share? She'll be 18 soon, and maybe they won't let her out of state just yet. But with someone older? Maybe.

She just has to be a bit more convincing. So, the European guy. He's got depths. Most people just have shallows. When she was younger she thought that was a literal thing, like they didn't fill all their bodies, they were hollow inside. She smirks. She knows that it's true now. Hollow people. In her experience most people are hollow.

So, this guy. He's a surprisingly good listener. He talks too much, of course, he's an adult. And a man. So that's kind of a given in Abigail's experience, a 'mansplainer' but he does it

with everyone so she thinks it's not just because she's younger or female or a poor little not dead girl victim. Yes, he does listen. To what she doesn't say as well as what she does. She's tried him out a bit and he catches on fast. So a bit of a challenge then. And he does seem to feel rather bad that his call meant that she nearly died. Yeah, she'll let him keep on thinking that. For now.

She tried to get him to tell her about the other two doctors, but he was surprisingly reticent. She'd even tried getting him on side saying she needed to know so that she wouldn't wound or upset them. But he seemed to sidestep that. Annoying really.

Apparently he's a bit of a cook so she might get to have a few meals at his place. He probably feels some kind of protective obligation or responsibility. Oh yawn. Or maybe it's a daddy kink, though that's not the read she got off him really.

With the flamboyance she'd say gay, but again a bit hard to tell, that just might be the whole European, I speak five languages and dress from three continents thing. If she could arrange for Em and the doctor to meet it'd be easier to manipulate the session. Or maybe she needs to have dinner and persuade Dr Lecter to ask 'goggles Graham'.

Now he has got daddy issues! Not the kinky kind (though hey, he's not awful, just old), maybe he's feeling broody? He, she thinks is definitely gay. Or gay friendly, or bi or something on that bit of the sexuality smorgasbord. She's not fussed. Bodies feeling nice, bodies feeling terrible. Just bodies.

She's pretty sure that goggles has quite a big thing (well she's hasn't looked but hey why not) for Dr L. She could do some serious head messing there. Unless they're unexpectedly good at honesty. And, again, in her experience, most people just aren't. Or they use such complex metaphors that everyone is lost once sentence in, or two if you're at the top of your game. She could see Dr L being rather delighted by his own brilliance.

She sighs. Maybe she ought to listen to Dr. Bloom again, she thinks she just mentioned Jack Crawford, the guy from the FBI. Now there's a man who was utterly unresponsive to any of her appeals to his kindness or compassion. What a psychopath.

Still. It takes one to catch one. At least so she's heard

Teenagers are Another Country

Chapter Summary

The Three Doctors (not a Whovian reference, sorry) and Jack deal re Abigail Hobbs.

'She strikes me as manipulative, cunning, perceptive and coercive'

'Jack! She was groomed by her father, probably for years. She is not responsible for the actions of her parent. Even if she was involved as a lure or contact it is inconceivable that she would be found responsible in a court. Hannibal, you've met with her what's your take?'

'I am aware that she is very adept at assessing a situation and responding as she thinks appropriate or as desired by those involved in the situation. She was under the impression that I had hidden my phone call to her household and attempted to manipulate that to her advantage. I refrained from telling her I had been candid about it. I hope to see if she endeavours to use this information further. Will I think you had some insight in relation to this?'

'Yeah. True. She is very interested in just how guilty I feel about shooting her father and how obligated that makes me feel towards her. She spent some time assuring me that I shouldn't feel bad about making her an orphan. She rephrased this a number of times, I think to reenforce the point.'

'None of this means that she wasn't coerced, simply that she has learnt a range of behaviours that she is now maintaining in order to navigate the situation in which she now finds herself.'

'I think that's true Dr. Bloom. But although she is legally still a minor she is very close to being 18 and I think we need to consider carefully the extent of her involvement. How is she settling in to the facility?'

'She is resistant to group work and tries to exert undue influence in her individual interactions. Again this may be because she is using this as survival mechanism in an unfamiliar environment.'

'I appreciate that you are endeavouring to be as fair as possible to Abigail Hobbs, but I'm not convinced that she is cooperating fully.'

'I think she has some things she is holding back, I think she is defensive and by turns aggressive, but I'd expect all these things to manifest in someone who is essentially an exploited vulnerable 17 year old, even if she is not aware of it herself.'

'So, how do we go forward?'

'You know she has a cousin?'

'Yes. She told me yesterday. I believe the cousin is willing to relocate to the area and provide a point of stability for Abigail if and when she can be released. I understand they are currently seeking employment. The cousin is from her mother's side, so that may help the transition away from her father's sphere of influence too.'

'Are you intending to meet the cousin?'

'At present, no. But in time. I hope this will be possible.'

'So, our next step is?'

'If Dr Bloom is an agreement we wondered about the possibility of taking Abigail back to her house and her father's cabin in case there is anything further we can learn.'

'Hannibal, I have to admit I'm not wild about this as an idea, but I can see how it might be both useful to the case and therapeutic for Abigail, help her see herself as a survivor, so I'm willing to go along with it. When do you plan on going?'

'Jack, when can you make Ms Katz available for any evidence recovery? Can we fit our availability to hers, Alana I'm assuming you will come too? Will?'

'Alright. I'll sign off on it. Flights and car and motel space. Dr Bloom perhaps you will give some thought to how you might manage Abigail's security and accompaniment, as a minor and across state lines'

As they stand to leave Jack's office they regard one another. This is a complex case and they are liable to both professional and public scrutiny if anything goes wrong. More wrong.

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'Will, how come I'm coming with you?' Bev and Will are sitting in the lab.

'More to the point how come we're not!?' Zeller is a bit fed up about this. They've done a lot of the dull lab work and this looks interesting.

'Really? It's a bit of a punt. Chances are nothing will come of it. But if it helps the girl it'll be worth it. I think Bev gets to come partly because we need another woman on the team'

'Go equality!'

'Sorry Bev'

'It's ok. I get it, anyway it's like a free holiday trip with gruesome bits, well former gruesome bits, and I can annoy Alana and you and Dr Gorgeous all in one, looks like a lot of win from where I'm sitting. When do we leave?'

Born to be Wild

Chapter Summary

Abigail Hobbs' cousin Em lays out some plans.

Chapter Notes

TW mention of domestic abuse, mention of violent killing, mention of extreme manipulation.

Alright girl? I'm using this address cos it belongs to a mate of mine and well, you know. Better to be safe and all that shit. I passed on your love to Ma, she sends it back too. She's still being all weepy. But you know it was her sister after all.

So, you're going back to the house. Ok. That's alright. There's nothing there to find. I checked the air ducts after the last police trawl and removed our little package of shall we call them souvenirs? I think that's what they call them on CSI and shit. I don't think we need to take any other 'forensic countermeasures', the cabin is pretty clean, well done your dad for that, right.

How you getting on with that? Bit of a fuck up wasn't it? Although I get what you're saying. With him dead there's no one to contradict anything you come up with. Nice one! Still sorry you got hurt though. Good job about the doctor bloke being with the fed.

What's with him? He looks a bit wet. I hung around outside the Quantico place the other day saw him with the doctor bloke, are they a thing? Could be a thing? Is that allowed now? I think you're not supposed to fuck your doctor. Have you thought about that as a possibility. I know he's a bit old for you, but hey? Or maybe I could give it a try. Either of them. The younger one is cute in a damp squib kind of way. The older one looks like he might be the iceberg kind, you know fucking global warming?

Anyway, yeah, your dad. He must have been so shocked when you did your mom. Sounds like that went down pretty clean. good job, and good job she didn't make it, could have been a bit awkward! Lol.

I laughed my ass off when you told me the fed shot your dad. I mean how good is that? You got to look like double the injured party - your dad hurts you and the fed shoots your dad. Perfect. Fuckin A+ would go again! Saved you a job. Do you think your dad knew about all the girls? Or just the recent ones?

What did you say to him that got him so riled? I know you said the doc called you and asked to visit. Do you think your dad thought he'd sort of take the blame? I can't believe he thought he'd survive it. Idiot. Do you think he was going to do you anyway, just to stop us? Did he know about me and the others?

Shit. What a loser. All he had to do was be cool about it. You could have all got through it. Him denying it, you looking all innocent and scared, your mum being all Martha Stewart. Easy. Still if he was going to panic this was way the best outcome. LMFAO! I tell you.

Anyway. Yeah right. I talked to Cassie she said she's solid, but Marissa is looking a bit wobbly. I don't know about Nick. He said he's going to come up tomorrow whilst you're there and try and get a word. He's come up with some angle or something. I don't know,w he gets theories, you know.

I'm not worried about them to be honest. If they fuck up we can deal with it, yeah? So, yeah Marissa is going to see if she can get out from under her bitch of a mother, and see you, and maybe Nick too.

I'm going to see Cassie again. She's seeing some boy at college. He's a prick and smacks her a bit. So I'm either going to give him a bit of a talking to, or I'm going to lend Cassie something to help. Better not to tell you babe.

So what else, oh yeah I had an interview. Good. I think. The boss is a bit of an egotistical bastard but that's not unusual. Are you going to get one of your docs to sign you off on accommodation. I'm going to move maybe in six weeks. That'd be good.

Apart from all this stuff everything is pretty sweet. Glad you're doing alright. Don't forget to keep emails and phones clean. And I don't need to remind you to destroy this do I. ;-p

Alright, let me know how it goes back home, yeah?

Love you,

Em

Return to sender

Chapter Summary

New evidence emerges and it changes everything!

So. We have something new to consider. And I'm not going to say I told you so' Jack pauses. 'Except I just did. We've got a letter. Actually it is to Dr Lecter, but we open this kind of thing when it shows up, just in case, you know.'

They nod. They all understand 'just in case'.

Jack looks around his office, if what he holds in the the transparent document evidence bag is real then there is going to be shit to pay, and the people in this office are all going to be affected by it.

'Ok. Ostensibly it's from Hobbs' he holds up his hand at the startled reactions he gets. 'Jimmy's looked at the prints, you want to tell us...?'

'Ok. Sure Jack. No one is going to like this but the fingerprint evidence on the letter comes straight back to Garrett Jacob Hobbs. Preliminary handwriting comparison says it's from him too. The envelope has multiple fingerprints including Hobbs and several FBI and postal employees.'

Alana looks at Jack and Jimmy mildly alarmed. 'But, how? I don't understand? What is it? What does he say? When?'

Jimmy sighs and looks at Will and then Hannibal.

'Jack?' Jack nods 'ok and I'm not going to do a Minnesota accent or anything, ok? And I'll read it straight, no editorialising until the end? Here we go' he pauses for a moment 'brace yourselves

Dr Hannibal Lecter
C/o FBI
Quantico
Virginia

Dear Dr Lecter,

You don't know me and we probably won't meet, but please read this carefully. Are you paying attention? You see. I know. You won't understand, but thank you for telephoning. It's given me time. I'd already thought about what to do if ever. Well, if it ever got this far.

I love my girl. She's not quite, right. But she's my beautiful lovely precious daughter. Her mom and I only have the one. She's everything to us. Everything.

It's been a mess for months now. She and her cousin. A few others. They've got a thing going on. And those poor girls. What's been done to them. What Abigail has been doing to them. I'm ashamed I couldn't stop her. I tried. As hard as I could. I did. I went with her, tried to steer her off. But she and her cousin. I know it's so bad. I love her, you see. If you're a parent you'll understand. We'll do anything for our children, for our family. Anything.

So I know now what I'll have to do. I'm going to make it quick, try and make it painless. I don't want to. I don't want to. But I can't bear the thought of her in prison. Rotting away without the sunlight, the trees. She lives for the woods, and the hunting. Maybe I should never have taught her. I've so many regrets.

I've only a few minutes. But I wanted to explain. I don't know what will happen. I think I already know it won't end well. Maybe killing her isn't the worst thing. But it feels like it to me. Her mom knows. She won't like this way out any more than me. But she'll understand. She's already forgiven me. If it comes to it.

Sincerely,

Garrett Jacob Hobbs

'The envelope was in the mailbox, of the neighbours. He wrote it fast, the ink has smudged and it's a bit scrappy in places. But it's from him. Dated the day, well the day it all went down. The neighbours were away. When they got back they just put a stamp on it and put it back in the mail and it got picked up, and delivered'.

Jimmy hands the document to Hannibal who reads it through once, to himself and closes his eyes and passes it to Will.

Will reads it. Again. And again. So much wanting it to say something different. It's Alana who offers

'Just because he wrote it doesn't make it true. He couldn't know how it would play out. Maybe this is some kind of ploy, a way of making everything that happened, you know.' She trails off.

'That's kind of you Alana, but I'm afraid the likelihood is that he's speaking the truth. Abigail is responsible for these deaths, not alone or solely, with others. We got it the wrong way round. Hobbs was the unwilling accomplice to his daughter. He was going to kill her, in his head, it was the only way of saving her.'

Hannibal stops. He spoke to Hobbs, for less than a minute. And this is the fall out. Or at least the initial fall out. There's more to come he's sure. He looks at Will.

Will has stood up and is looking out the window of Jack's office. It's autumn and there are the colours of the trees. And the pumpkin gold of September sunshine. He's still holding the evidence bag.

'Do we think she killed her mom then? I mean, that's kind of what we're suggesting aren't we? Killed her mom and set her dad up to take the fall' Will keeps his back turned to the room. He feels sickened and responsible.

'He did try to kill her' Jack remarks. He suspects he knows how this is going to go. There will be a review for sure. Easy to be wise after the event. Easier still with new evidence. And everyone will say Will should have shot to disable. Not emptied his goddamn clip into the guy.

No one will like that they saved a murderous teenager at the expense of her self-sacrificing dad. God, thinks Jack, Freddie Lounds! She's already on the inside with Abigail. This will, what, catapult her to fame and fortune. Maybe at Will's expense. Maybe. What a mess. Wills more trouble than.. well. Maybe not.

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'You can say it'

'Say what in particular Will? Say you were mistaken? Not knowing what you did then. You acted within the circumstances. That's all we can ever hope to do.' Hannibal hands Will a cup of coffee. They're in the Baltimore office. Will came away from Quantico and Jack's office straight to a sit down session with Hannibal.

Hannibal isn't quite sure which of them it might benefit more. They have become an unwitting support group. He needs to either refer Will or get this back to something more resembling a patient doctor relationship. He doesn't know which way to go and that's also unusual for him. Not knowing. It's disconcerting to say the least. And that simple fact alone should tell him everything he needs to know about how he feels about Will Graham. And should mean he refers Will, as soon as possible.

'I think you might have been a little pre-emptive in signing me off. Or at least, you might have been ok then. But maybe not now. I'm definitely not ok now. I'm. I feel. I don't know. I'm losing the plot some more. Maybe it's why I keep seeing Hobbs?'

'Seeing him?'

'Yeah. A ghostly apparition. He follows me sometimes. Keeps saying 'see! See!' Well I do now. God. I'm being haunted.'

He pus his forearm across his eyes. Like a small child might to block out the light if it hurt to look. All Hannibal wants to do is comfort him. He puts a very tentative hand on Will's arm. Will jumps like he's been burnt.

'Sorry. Sorry. It's like a shock to the system once it gets out of whack. Noise, touch, smells, things, it all gets too much. Like sensory jamming. I can't.'

Hannibal sits back, not apologising, they're past that. He turns to the lamp stand and dims the lights just slightly. 'Better?'

'A bit, yeah. Thanks. You know there'll be a review? Probably? Almost certainly.'

'Even though they previously gave you a commendation?'

'Probably because! You know. Putting things right?'

Hannibal nods. The bureaucratic desire to never be wrong even about the past, or in the past. It's a kind of re-writing he finds both distasteful and distrustful. Our histories become unreliable. Edited to smooth over the difficult bits. He knows he is guilty of it too. To an appalling extent. To change the present to accommodate the past is usually preferable. Not easier, but preferable.

'Will. May I suggest we try not to anticipate how this will fall out? Jack had intended we all go to Minnesota. He may decide this is something we should still pursue. The letter changes things for us. But Abigail doesn't know. We might find out some very valuable new evidence?'

'Yeah. He's thinking about it. Thinking about whether it will go worse or better with or without me'

'Regardless of what Jack wants, do you have a preference?'

'Honestly? And I'm trying to be honest, I feel like you deserve it. I don't know. I want to go, to somehow make it right. I want to get back on track. And I'm also terrified. Truly. Terrified. I could make this so much worse. And I've already pulled you into something awful. I don't want you to get hurt. And I want that so much it also scares me. I'm a mess. I'm totally fucked and I could get you, Alana, Bev all hurt so much worse'

'Will. We can make choices too. We can say no to Jack too. Beverly, Ms Katz, might feel the obligation of her job, but she too has some say. This has gone from being a simple trip with a survivor, to a much more complex endeavour with a suspected serial killer, even if she is 17! Jack won't commandeer us. He isn't in the position to do so even if he'd like to'

'What do you think I should do'

'As your doctor or as your friend?'

'Is it a different answer?'

'It is'

'Doctor first then'

'I'd like you to be signed off work for at least two weeks and to prescribe fishing and dog therapy for those next fourteen days, interspersed with decent food, some walks and maybe some light entertainment with friends or solitude if you'd prefer'

Will actually laughs at this. It's the best prescription he's ever heard. And he quite liked the last psychiatrist he'd had, well for the last few months anyway. Hannibal must have read the notes.

'Alright. That's not awful. What about as a friend?'

'I'd like you to borrow a cabin that belongs to a friend of mine. I'd like you to take the dogs and your fishing gear. Maybe other forms of entertainment, books, music, films, whatever would relax you. You'll have some visitors during the week, Ms Katz, maybe Alana, me, Jimmy, Zeller. Maybe some other friends of yours. Your father? You'll eat some decent food and have time off. Not to think necessarily, certainly not to overthink. What ever would lighten you.'

'Wow. Had you thought all that out before? Wow. I like that.' He wrinkles his nose up and then says slowly 'I'm not sure if Jack will bite? What about the Minnesota Trip?'

'I think I can combine insisting you have some time off, with a decent rationale for why you shouldn't be anywhere near Abigail Hobbs if or when she finds out we know of her involvement.'

'Ok. Yes then. Yes please. Really two weeks?'

'I suspect that in asking for two weeks Jack might allow ten days. I could ask for three weeks, and possibly get you the two?'

Slowly Will considers the possibility of two weeks as described by Hannibal. Two weeks. It might save him. 'Yeah. Please. Try for three, to get two? Thank you. How big a thank you can I say? Thank you. Oh. Wow. Oh yeah, where is it?'

'Coastal, further north. Just below Rhode Island. Does that sound acceptable?'

'It sounds amazing. And this may sound weird but I won't take the dogs. It's too short a space of time to get them used to it and then bring them back. They'd be good for me, but not good from them. It's a long car journey too.'

He grimaces. Not liking the idea of leaving them if he has the opportunity. But he's realistic. And Hannibal's friend might lend a person a cabin, but a person and seven dogs?! Even though Hannibal suggested it. Maybe one then. Maybe Winston.

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'Ok. Yeah. Alright then. I see what you're saying. And I have to say Doctor that's a fine piece of exchange you've wrangled there. You'll go to Minnesota if Will gets his vacation. Fine negotiating. And I say that as someone who does their fair bit'

Hannibal mentally toasts Jack as they hammer out the details. They've both done a fair bit of give and take in this, Jack has almost seen this as his idea, get Will out of the way during the period when the powers that be will decide about a review board, get Hannibal and Beverly and maybe Alana onto the whole Minnesota thing. He's going to send Zeller too. Even things

up a bit. Good result. Good result. Hopefully this decision won't come back to bite him in the arse. Yeah he thinks, with my luck

No man is an island entire of himself

Chapter Summary

> Two cabins, two sets of events, two sets of lives converging. And shit happens. Sorry Marissa.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal sees Will in the rear view mirror, steadily getting smaller receding in the distance as Hannibal drives away. He could see Will relaxing as they settled him in, and he looks almost cheery as he waves good bye.

It's been a long day. Five hours of driving which Will has mostly done delighting in the smooth ride that is the Bentley. They'd agreed Will, would drive up, Hannibal would show him around the locale make sure he'd got a grasp on where the nearest shops are, what amenities the house has, eat lunch and then Hannibal would drive home alone. He's managed to defer his patients for today but tomorrow he must fit three people in before he leaves for Minnesota.

Will wasn't delighted by the deal. His mouth turned down like a clown when Hannibal told him about it. Trust Jack. But Hannibal insists and the thought of some space and quiet (and no Jack) convinces him. He doesn't really need much of a push. As they drove northwards Hannibal could see the tension unwind from Will like thread off a spool.

'I like the car. I'm glad you suggested this. And thanks for letting me drive. I know it's practical but it's nice too. I could have flown you know?'

'This way you are compelled to stay put until I collect you in 2 weeks' time. So there are quite selfish motivations too. It also removes temptation from Jack as I told him you would be both car less and cell less.'

'Is that true? No cell reception'

'Some networks are unable to find a signal. Yes. I thought it prudent not to enquire too closely about yours'

'Sneaky Dr Lecter. A bit of a stretch of the truth?'

'Post-truth perhaps'

Will snorts, and Hannibal smiles.

Hannibal could see Will fit into the cabin in the first thirty minutes they were there.he notes he feels a pang of regret that he cant stay. He comforts himself with the thought that he'll return in a little over a week's time. He pulls his thoughts away from Will. He knows he is finding this increasingly difficult to do. So he sighs. Puts some complicated Wagner on the car's music system and focuses on the drive.

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In the evening he packs for two days in Minnesota. At least he will be with Ms Katz and Dr Zeller as well as Alana. An interesting combination. And Abigail Hobbs. He ponders his various thoughts about Abigail. He still feels a degree of obligation towards her and he still believes in 'innocent until proven guilty'. But, but. The letter from her father is damning. He also recognises a kind of calculating coldness with which he is intimately familiar. He wonders if she ctatches a drift of that from him.

He's tired now. He needs a decent amount of sleep if he is to navigate the potential obstacles of the next few days. So he goes to bed and Doesn't see until the morning a text from Will.

hey. Hey. It's great here. I really love it. Thank you so much. I owe you something enormous, like my first born or equivalent. I hope the drive home was alright. Did you stop at the same diner. Did they look at you like you'd maybe dumped my body somewhere? I thought the girl with the gum looked like she had to make up stories about the diners just to keep from going crazy. You know? Anyway I've spent half an hour in deep communion with the Koi. And found one of those Buddha boards, so I've been using that this evening. I'll send you any decent photos. And now I shall have a bath and then I will sleep. Doesn't that sound safely boring? I'll take it! You know I'll think of you in Minnesota. Be careful. Will

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'Alana? Alana? Can you hear me? Don't try to move, you're concussed. I can't tell how badly you're hurt. I'm calling the ERT, don't try to move.'

'Hann.. what's happened? What's going on? Where are we?'

'Where at the Hobbs residence. I think we've both been assaulted. I'm a little unclear.'

'Where are Bev and Brian, are they here?'

'I don't know. You are the first person I've found. There's a large pool of blood in the living room. No don't move. I'm so relieved it's not yours.'

He calls the emergency services, ambulance and police and then tries Bev on her cell. There's no answer. So he calls Brian who does reply.

'Hi Dr L, what's going on, where are you?'

'Where still at the Hobbs' house, where are you?'

'At the cabin. We've been waiting for you. What's happened? Are you ok?'

'Is Abigail Hobbs with you?'

'We left her with you. Shit, is she gone, what's happened?'

'She has gone. With whom I do not know. Alana and I were both attacked. How late is it? When did you expect us?'

'We've been waiting about an hour, we thought you were right behind us. There's no one here but me and Bev. Though someone's been in the cabin or at least moved the police tape.'

'You should stay in sight of one another. There's a pool of blood here. It's possible that Abigail has been hurt. Or that she has hurt someone else. There is nothing to say she'll come to you but she might. I've called the police , ill direct some to you too. Don't get separated. Well come to you once Alana has been seen.

When the ERT arrive they insist on taking Alana in with a suspected fracture to her skull. Hannibal's contusion is less severe so he's simply given ice and a shot for the pain. The local police do a sweep of the property and the captain comes to Hannibal

'We think there were three people here. But only one hurt. Badly by the look of it. Hard to tell how long ago it was.'

Hannibal calls Zeller again 'Alana has gone to hospital. The police say there were three people here. They may still come in your direction. One of them has been hurt badly. I'll be with you in forty minutes or so. Can you Wait?'

'Sure doc, the PD has just turned up here now. We'll sit tight.

.....

When Hannibal arrives Beverly and Zeller are leaning on the hood of their hire car.

'Have you been inside?'

'No, the second time you called we were about to. We thought we'd wait. We've done a sweep outside. One scarf, but that's it!' He holds up an evidence bag

'Alright, lets get the PD to clear downstairs and we'll go in'

When they're given the nod they go inside. It's quite something. Bev and Zeller have seen it before. It's new to Hannibal. He's almost impressed at its serial dedication to awfulness. Bev and Zeller run a scan for blood, buts it's clean. Then Zeller starts up the stairs.

'What the very fuck! Watch your feet, come and see'

The three of them look at the dark haired girl impaled on the antlers hanging from the wall. She has long dark hair and fits the victim profile of the Minnesota Shrike totally.

'It's Abigail's friend' says Hannibal 'from yesterday. Marissa I think.' Beverly steps in, there's something under her fingernails and on her teeth. And one long strand of brown hair. She

looks around, on the other side of the room there are two long curly red hairs, she holds them up and then shrugs before popping them in an evidence bag. Zeller looks shiftily at them as she puts them carefully away.

.....

Earlier...

'How hard did you hit Dr Bloom? Do you think you killed her?

'No just knocked her out for a bit. I hit him a good bit harder I reckon.'

'Yeah? His head is probably thicker though'

'True story. Alright. Where to now? Cabin?'

'Yeah. I've an idea for Marissa' Abigail glances into the back seat. Marissa Schurr is slumped across the seat held in place by a seat belt across her body. She could either be drunk or a sloppy sleeper. She's either dead or close to it. Nick put down a tarp and blanket to keep the blood off the seats. Though he reckons she left most of it on Abigail's living room floor.

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At her dad's cabin there is police evidence tape. Yeah right like that's going to stop them. Nick peels it back and gets the door open. He goes back to the car to help Abigail with Marissa's body. They carry her into the cabin using the tarp and blanket. Inside the cabin they roll her up and Nick does his best to sling her over his shoulder. She's surprisingly unwieldy he thinks. He gets her up the stairs and they unwrap her. Abigail gets most of he clothes off whilst he checks the antlers are secure on the wall.

Together they have to physically throw Marissa onto the antlers. This is the hardest bit. It's a physical effort to get her there in place. but they manage, and then high five each other. Once she's there she's an effective tableau. The blood is merely oozing now. Abigail thinks she's dead but Nick's not sure. He takes two Polaroid pictures. One for them and one for Em, who's keeping an album. Good thing about polaroids. No negatives, no digital copy you only think you erased.

She looks good there, hair falling forwards. Looking just like her 'dad's ' victims. Perfect.

As they're going downstairs they hear a car in the distance. There's a switchback above the cabin so cars sound close then far, close then far, close then far before they arrive so they've maybe ten minutes grace. Better to take no chances. They drive away and pull off the road onto a logging track, round a bend and then stop. They get out of the car and walk back, keeping just inside the tree line wanting to get within sight of the cabin but not too close.

Bev and Brian drive up. There's no one here, though the tape has been pulled down, fluttering like a parade, and there are new tyre tread marks in the earth. He stays at the door whilst Bev skirts round the edge of the cabin. She's gone for nearly ten minutes. When she comes back she's holding a cotton scarf in her gloved hands. It's long, blue, with batik fish on it and

random blue beads scattered over the surface. Pretty. The sort of thing a teenage girl might wear. She puts it in an evidence bag.

'That's it?'

'Yeah. You photographed the tyre marks'

'Sure. Running it now. Well, Jimmy is. Back in the lab.'

'Weird Dr L and Alana aren't here yet. Weren't they going to follow us?'

'Yeah. Though I think Abigail wanted to get some clothes or something? What do you want to do?'

'Wait a few minutes? Then call them?'

'Ok. Sure'

Five minutes later and there's still no sign so Brian gets out his cell. He's looking for Hannibal's number when it rings in his hand, they both jump!

'Sorry, nerves! I'm a bit freaked out by all this'

'Yeah. Antlers are creepy as fuck anyway! Without the weird traumatised cannibal girl thrown in'

'Oh she's just a teenager. And a pretty fucked up one'

'When did you get so tolerant?'

'Cousins'

He answers the phone 'hello, hi Dr L.....'

.....

It feels like it all takes for ever, but eventually the PD turn up, then Hannibal and they all compare notes. This is a screw up of the highest order. Someone is going to be in big trouble. Still it more or less puts to bed the issue of Abigail Hobbs' involvement in the deaths of those eight, now nine girls. That she got away clean today is of some chagrin to Hannibal and the two science team members. They have been convincingly played. She must have arranged for someone to pick her up. The timings were well managed. Beverly and Brian had only just left, she remembers to collect her clothes, she splits Hannibal and Alana in the house and then they are both knocked out. Hannibal first as he's the more dangerous of the two. And she waltzes off.

Although what happened next is a little harder to work out. Why has Marissa Schurr been killed? was she some kind of weak link in whatever scheme of things Abigail is working through. And who was the third person? Her father said there was a group, but not who, apart from the cousin. So, maybe the cousin?

.....

Ok, so what now?

'I reckon they'll be stuck here for ages. You know how long police shit takes don't you?'

'Yeah. True. So we go then?'

'We could. I dunno. Lets ask Em. Maybe we could find out what's going on at that end. You drive. I'll call.'

Abigail gets out her cell and calls her cousin

'Alright Abs, what's happening?'

'We've just left the cabin, the police have just arrived. We're back at the car. We left Marissa'

'She won't say anything?'

'Not again'

There's a pause

'Alright then. How was that?'

'She might have been a bit surprised. I guess. Didn't make much noise though. We took her to the cabin. Left them a little present.'

'Ok, you want to know about my end of things?'

'Yeah, fill us in.'

'Alright. So the doc brought Graham here day before yesterday and then just dropped him off, showed him around a bit first, you know, the town and shops and shit. There's a whole lot of nothing here, just commercial fishing really and tourists in the summer.'

'Have you kept out of sight?'

'Yeah better for him not to see me in case it's useful later? I hung around a bit yesterday, see what he did and stuff. He hasn't got a car here so he's on foot. Makes it harder and easier to follow him you know?'

'So he's alone?'

'Yeah, I haven't seen anyone else around. It's like he's just visiting. I don't think he knows the area.'

'That's good right? Works in our favour?'

'Yeah, it does. What are you going to do now? It's quite late. You won't drive it tonight will you?'

'No, we'll drive up tomorrow. Where are you Staying?'

'Trailer park, don't roll your eyes Abs, I can hear it when you do. It's alright. Don't be a snob. Nice people there. Not too nosey. Tidy place. Clean. Got it for ten days. Sweet huh?'

'Yeah. Ok Em. See you tomorrow then, maybe late afternoon? Alright. Be careful. We'll swop cars if we can. Love you'

Chapter End Notes

If you haven't read 'the Foxes Wedding' by theHoyden in this fandom I heartily recommend all its lush Japaneseness. And if that's your thing, then the next segment of this AU should also appeal to you.

Do not send to know for whom the bell tolls..

Chapter Summary

As Abigail and co make their way to Em, Will is settling into cabin life. There's some kind of storm coming.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Em has spent the morning sitting in the rental car, feet up on the dash, eating snacks and drinking take-out coffee. Grimacing when it gets too cold to be pleasant.

Will didn't leave the house at all except to put some waste in the outdoor compost bin. How very green of him. How very predictable. How very boring. Boooooooring. At lunchtime Will walks into the nearby town with an empty haversack slung over his shoulders. Shopping maybe? Em trails him round the town. Looks like he's getting quite a bit of stuff. Maybe someone coming to visit? They'll have to watch for that, maybe take shifts or something.. see if they can get a pattern for his behaviour.

He's a bit erratic. God. Erratic and boring. Thought he's quite cute in a naughty professor kind of way. All stern and glasses. Em grins, ooooh sir!

After another boring afternoon of Will sitting beside the fishpond and painting Em can see him go inside and put on some different shoes. Maybe he's going out for the evening? Or something wild like that, paint the town pink! Em smirks, good joke!

Will doesn't know he's followed. Usually he'd be a bit careful in a strange place, but if he's in a strange place it's usually for work which lends itself to vigilance. Not so much now. In town he finds the fish cafe/bar he saw earlier. It turns into a sort of eat in bar in the evenings with an emphasis on the food. Maybe Will will bring his dad here next week or Hannibal, or both of them, if it's any good.

He's brought a book to read so that he can be both friendly to the staff and keep some distance if it gets lively later on. He orders clam chowder with crusty bread. When it comes the bread is crispy, the butter amazing, and the soup just takes his breath away. In the good kind of way, not the choke to death version. Hmm. Not a tasty thought.

As the evening progresses he has a second glass of wine, then a crawfish salad with fresh noodles an unexpected treat to have something like this, maybe it's down to the local crews or their families? Where the fishermen are, the food will follow.

He thinks he'll skip dessert and then he sees the menu. Nice! Ice cream, sorbets, bombe, glacé, even cassata, what an interesting combination. He opts for a watermelon sorbet with a

lemon curd glacé. He almost moans aloud with how good it is. As he sits there he chats occasionally to the staff . Will is good at this kind of thing. If he's not under pressure of any kind he can make nice and find common ground with pretty well anyone. Here he talks food, fishing, engines and music.

From the car Em can see him talking and decides to have a bit of fun with this, (maybe not tell Abs, she can lose her sense of humour sometimes). Will is a bit surprised when someone sits down opposite him

'Alright? I'm just waiting for take out. S'not a problem is it? You on holiday?'

Will smiles faintly. If it's a chat up, well it's pretty unlikely they're this desperate, Will is at least 15 years older than his new friend. so he takes it for passing friendliness. Just a new face to make nice to.

'Sure, just taking a break, you from here?'

'I work near, stay in the park, you know ?' Will nods 'I work in the local hospital, the bigger one, you know it'

Will nods 'good place to work?

'They pay, right? Know what I mean? Busy too, no chance of being bored. What about you'

'Teacher' it's Will stock answer for situations like this 'physical and social sciences, college. Also busy. You know. The people business? Lots coming and going. Nice though, I like it. Pays the bills and a bit more'

'Not ambitious to move on up then?'

'Why fix it if it's not broke right?'

'You look too cute to be a teacher. Lots of crushes right?'

'Not so I'd notcie. I'm pretty strict overall. No ones been obvious anyway (except maybe Hannibal)'

'No little notes, or chocolates, or accidental extra cups of coffee and would sir like it? I'd give you one'

Will blinks, not sure if the double entendre was meant or not. There's something just slightly off about the conversation. He feels like it's play acting. But why? Surely not a come on? Something else?

'Here's your order'

Em gets up and takes the large polystyrene cup and lid and paper bag of bread.

'See you around then, maybe? If you're here for a bit?'

'Sure, a bit. Enjoy the soup, it's good.'

Em leaves the cafe and Will goes back to his book. He thinks of the encounter with a feeling of bewilderment, the desk clerk winks at him and laughingly says 'you made a friend there' Will smiles and shrugs.

He carries on reading between bites of food and bites of conversation, it's a collection of short stories he found in the house. He's trying not to devour them too.

He'd spent the afternoon next to the koi pond using a Buddha board to capture the movement and shapes. The board is a subtle thing, you paint on it with water and it gives the impression of a brushstroke of ink. The dark lines fade and disappear fairly quickly. You have to be fast and delicate and unattached. He has his phone camera just in case he hits a sweet spot. It's kind of against the spirit of the thing to photograph something intended to be ephemeral. But given that he remains unattached to all but one throughout the afternoon he's not doing badly.

He only stops because he's getting quite stiff, maybe not cold but from sitting focussed so intently. He stretches, goes back inside and finds his shoes and a coat, he can fit it over the haori if he's careful. He's reluctant to give it up. It's not cold, but there's a breeze off the sea which freshens things a little.

The walk is pleasant, easy. He thinks it will rain later. With the moon.

.....

Em eats the soup in the car. Up close to Graham his appeal is more evident. He's alright. Bit on the older side, but hey. But what a dull way to spend an evening. He had a fucking book! Em gets so distracted by Will's boringness that Will manages to both visit the kitchen staff and depart through the back door without being observed. Will walks home with one of the staff coming off shift who lives just one cabin along from his. They have an interesting conversation about the local small Japanese population that have influenced some of the food and buildings locally. There's even a lantern festival, as well as one for the Sakura. Will wonders if it might be possible to come back. For the cherry blossom. Or the lanterns. Something light and romantic. With Hannibal.

Some time close to midnight Em realises Will didn't go to the rest room he's actually gone. Shit. Shit. How did that even happen. Em considers whether to go back to the trailer, it's just starting to rain, or go back to what will be a cold damp vigil outside the cabin. The trailer, beer and TV win. No contest.

.....,,....

In the morning Will wakes up to birdsong outdoors and what might be a squirrel chattering in a nearby tree. He feels really good. Really good. He looks at the photo on his phone of the koi he painted yesterday. He sends it to Hannibal as he had said he would.

Hey, the local bar does great crawfish and proper noodles. Maybe we can go when you're here. If that's still possible. I hope so. How are you? Well I hope. Anything interesting in Minnesota? Can't be as exciting as here. Will

ps. Here's a koi I painted yesterday. I hope the good wishes that come with it aren't as ephemeral as the painting. Also Will

He eats breakfast, and porridge and fruit and some tea. When he's on his third cup his phone buzzes. He thinks it'll be Hannibal. It's Bev.

alright babe? Total shit here. They're both ok but Alana and Dr. L both got whacked over the head yesterday. And Abigail Hobbs is gone. TOTES. Jack is furious A++, Z and I ok but totally fckd but not in a good way. Txt u l8r for more news. Gotta go and be shat on. Love you

Will puts down his cup and calls Hannibal straight away, it goes to voice mail.

'Hannibal, I've just had a text from Beverly. Now I'm properly worried. Are you Alright? What happened? Is Alana ok? Please text me when you can, I realise you might be a bit occupied!'

He tries not to hover next to the phone, willing it to ring. He makes more tea. Decides to make some noodles, kneading the dough will be soothing. Maybe steamed buns too if there is a steamer. There are two, tucked behind the pasta machine, that's he's going to have to work out how to get the rollers right so that the pasta is thin enough for noodles.

Having a task helps him not to over stress. Bev said they were both fine. It's fine. Hannibal is fine (so is Alana, he's not a horrible friend) he gets his cell out again and texts Alana,

hey, I've just heard. I really hope you are alright. Txt me when you get a chance please if it's possible. Willxx he looks at the message and then deletes the kisses. Let's not complicate that he thinks.

He makes yet more tea and then has to go and pee he's ingested so much liquid. Just as he's washing his hands his cell goes, it's Hannibal.

'Will. Thank you for the text'

'Are you ok? What on earth happened?'

'I believe it is fitting to say we have been outmanoeuvred by a skilled opponent'

'Wow. That's pretty bad. How's your head?'

'A little tender. But I am better than Alana. Her skull was fractured, not badly, but nevertheless she will need to be careful. And her mother is coming.'

'Oh? That's good, though Judith is quite formidable.'

'Indeed, i believe it's where Alana gets it from.'

they both pause to pay silent homage to Alana and Judith Bloom.

'So, what are you going to do now? Has Jack involved you?'

'My statement has been taken and I have sidestepped the next how ever many official meetings there will be over this. I believe Ms Katz and Mr Zeller have not been so lucky.'

'Beverly said she'd call me later'

Hannibal smiles. The science team grapevine is as fast and efficient as he'd imagined. It will be of use to him too at some point he has no doubt.

'Physically she is fine, but they are both unnerved by the fact they probably just missed Abigail and her accomplice at the cabin. Mr Zeller is upset in case the girl was still alive when they arrived, and that they might have saved her.'

'What? Wait? What girl? I only know you were hurt and Abigail Hobbs is gone. What?'

Hannibal goes back to the start and recounts their two days in Minnesota and the disaster it has become. At the end Will asks

'I'm assuming there's an APB out in Abigail. Do we know who she's with?'

'As yet, no.'

'Damn. Look, I'm really sorry you've been dragged into this and now hurt. Can I do anything, can I help. I could come back.'

'Not at all. I have patients tomorrow and various commitments over the weekend. But I still anticipate collecting you next week. If that is still amenable to you?'

'Yes. Great. Thank you. Do you want to come a few days early? Just to have some peace and quiet, recovery time. I'll even cook and let you put your feet up. Maybe not the whole geisha thing. But you're always looking out for me.'

Hannibal is distracted for a moment by the idea of Will in traditional geisha clothing looking after him.

'Hannibal?'

You're very kind. I will look at my diary for the next week. Thank you Will. I had better go, my other line is ringing'

'Ok. Bye Hannibal take care'

It hasn't been the long and meandering kinds of conversation they often have but it's covered all the essentials. Will puts his cell down on the side. For just a moment he considers calling Jack. But then he thinks of all the pains, literally now, that Hannibal went to to get him these two weeks. So he resists.

Outside on the property line Em has been watching, waiting for Will to do something other than cook and mess around with his phone. Dear god this guy is tedious. Cute but tedious. No one said stake outs were so boring. What a yawn. It's lunchtime so Em decides to go and get something to eat. It doesn't look like Dr Domestic Graham is going anywhere and what if he

does, where's he going to go? Anyway Abs and Nick and maybe Cassie will be here later, so maybe a bit of shop liberation is in order.

.....

Late that night Em is still waiting for his cousin to arrive. They've texted every few hours to say more or less where they are. Em thinks they're probably pissing around. But then. Em gave up at Wills place at 9:30. All Will seeemd to do was alternate between reading, cooking, and looking at his cell or tablet screen. Em really hopes this isn't what life holds in store for everyone because just fuck me and die it looks tedious. He should be out shagging or something. He could be. Bit of a loser. Em yawns.

Later still Abigail calls to say they are outside the harbour masters office. Em meets them there and they all go back to the trailer. Cassie is with them. That's both good and bad. She always winds Abigail up. Flirts with Em. Is scornful to her brother. So. It could go multiple ways.

Back at the trailer they talk, and agree to start surveillance on Will properly from tomorrow. If they can they'll grab him at some point over the next few days. Once they've worked out somewhere to stash him or display him. Depends on if they decide to kill him or not. They might toss a coin. But better find a good place first. They eat pizza, drink beer, watch bad tv. And are still up at 5am, high on the last few days.

Back at the cabin Will has found some incense. in a flight of fancy maybe, he draws a picture on the Buddha board multiple times whilst the incense burns. A boon to some gods, who ever looks after friendship and distant loved ones. Will reflects that really the offering is of his focussed time, and maybe that's not too bad as these things go. Eventually he's pleased with the result.

Just before he goes to bed he texts Hannibal again, this time the incense glows and sends smoke across the image against a backdrop of chrysanthemums that fade and drop their petals. It's a gif. He hopes Hannibal knows how to play it on his phone. It's very effective.

Hey. I was thinking, if I was nearer I'd send flowers or something like that. So here are some virtually. Think of it as a gif(t) - sorry, very bad - make sure you open it! Will

Hannibal is at the very end of his day and almost his tether. He sees a text from Will has arrived. He opens the gif (rolling his eyes at the pun, but smiling too, amused by Will) and is utterly charmed. The smoke from the incense blows across the screen at the same time as two blooms drop their petals and fade. And then it begins again. It's affecting and rather lovely.

Thank you Will. After a trying day (excepting you and the koi - truly you are a man of the fish) this is refreshment of all kinds. Warm wishes. Hannibal Lecter

Will grins. He's getting even better at this sort of thing. Flowers huh? You flirt Graham!

Chapter End Notes

Buddha boards are just great!

End Notes

Of course the title is based on 'Hobson's Choice' which is really no choice at all...

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!